

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 23 without prejudice and amend claims 1, 14 and 21 as follows.

Sub 1  
B1  
1. (Twice Amended) A method for merging partially filled ATM cells, comprising the steps of:  
removing a first partially filled ATM cell from an ATM cell stream;  
removing a second partially filled ATM cell from the ATM cell stream; and  
merging the first partially filled ATM cell and the second partially filled ATM cell into a third ATM cell having a header that includes information indicative of the merging method used [number of partially filled ATM cells contained within the third ATM cell].

Sub 2  
B2  
14. (Twice Amended) An ATM network, comprising:  
a first node configured to identify partially filled ATM cells within an ATM cell stream passing through the first node and to merge two or more of the partially filled ATM cells in the cell stream into a merged cell the merged cell having a header that includes information indicative of the merging method used [number of partially filled ATM cells contained within the merged cell]; and  
a second node coupled to the first node and configured to identify a merged ATM cells and to split the merged ATM cell into two or more partially filled ATM cells.

Sub 3  
B3  
21. (Amended) An ATM cell, comprising:  
a payload including information from two or more partially filled ATM cells; and  
a header including information indicative of the merging method used to construct the ATM cell [number of partially filled ATM cells contributing the information within the payload].